

Is Microsoft Punishing "Used Game" Customers?

Contributed by Kevin Kaminsky
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Microsoft recently released the Gears of War 2 'Flashback' map pack for purchase on the Xbox 360 Marketplace. The pack is available now at the low price of 400 MS points. The excitement level over this new map pack is low since most people have it already. A voucher for the map pack is included in the Gears of War 2's case when the game is purchased new.

So why re-release

it for purchase when everyone should have it? The simple answer is that most people didn't buy the game new, they purchased a used copy of Gears of War 2. Now most of the time I couldn't care about used games but it is a part of the market place and for those gamers that are cost conscious, saving a few bucks on a semi-new game is big deal. For game publishers on the other hand, the used games market is like someone trespassing on their territory.

It seems now that Microsoft is trying

to make sure that they get their share of these extra earnings. By making a part of the included game downloadable non-refundable content they can still receive some extra revenue. This single deterrent may not hurt the sales of used titles but it could start a trend that may eventually affect your ability to find that not so new game for a truly cheaper price.

If the idea of edging out the used games market doesn't bother you, I totally understand. When I was first saw the Gears of War 2 'Flashback' map pack post on Joystiq, I didn't care at first. Then I started to think about the long term implications. The idea of publishers removing content to hurt the used games market. I'm not worried about the larger retail chains, they've turned used games into a joke. Over the years the tag line of "Do you want to buy this used, and save a few bucks" has become the new "Do you want fries with that." I'm talking about the Mom and Pop shops that need used games to turn a higher profit.

Basically these small

businesses only make a few dollars on new games. Most of the time it's less then \$5. This mean that they have to sell a lot of games to turn a profit, hell it's hard for these stores to break even most of the time. Selling used games on the other hand pull in more money. This is why the first item a new store purchases is a "We Buy, Trade and Sell Used Games" neon sign. It breaks down like this, if a store buys back a game at say \$20 they could turn around and re-sell it for \$40 or \$50. This make the game still less then a new copy and the store go from making

less than \$5 to over \$15. It's simple math that could help a new start-up or existing small store make their quota for the month. If this market disappears it could hurt the small business market. Larger retailers might complain about the situation but in the long run it won't be a bit of difference to them. I wish the same could be said for the smaller retailers.